

# SPECIAL NEEDS

INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

For additional CHS Family Education Program materials, please call (714) 712-7888. For more information about CHS Early Learning and Education Programs, call (888) CHS-4KIDS.

Family Education Program materials and podcasts, and information on CHS programs can also be found on our website at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org).



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All children share the same basic needs: to be accepted, cared for, loved, valued, and supported. A child with special needs is someone who requires specific support for health, intellectual, emotional, or physical developmental needs. As a caregiver, being aware of every child's needs will help you provide the best care for all children.





Including a child with special needs in your program can benefit everyone. You will need to learn about the child's daily activities, development, and routines in order to work as a team with parents and other professionals to contribute to the child's success.

### ★ WHO IS A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

All children grow and develop. A child with special needs experiences some delays or differences in development. Children with special needs are also referred to as children with disabilities. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), children with special needs have physical or mental disabilities that may limit them from "major life activities," such as breathing, learning, hearing, seeing, speaking, or walking.

There are many different types of special needs. A child may also have a combination of disabilities that may make learning or other activities more difficult. Some areas of developmental delays or disabilities are:

- Communication (stuttering, voice disorders)
- Emotional and social (autism, emotional disturbance)
- Intellectual (dyslexia, learning disability)
- Physical (allergies, being without a limb, blindness)

If you suspect that a child in your care may have special needs, respectfully bring it to the parents' attention and recommend an evaluation. As the child's caregiver, it is important to provide parents with plenty of support and community resources. Advise parents that the child's school district can often be a good place to begin the evaluation process and obtain resources.



### ★ INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

Children with special needs are protected by the IDEA, which requires public schools to provide free public education to children with identified special needs. The IDEA also requires each child with special needs to have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) (children from birth to 3 years) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (children from 3 to 21 years).

#### IFSP and IEP

If a child in your care is receiving special services, you may have the opportunity to participate in the child's IFSP or IEP. Your participation may require, but is not limited to:

- Having open communication with parents and other professionals, such as the child's pediatricians, therapists, and other specialists. Remember to get written consent from the child's parents before sharing any confidential information.
- Allowing the child to receive services identified in the IFSP or IEP while she is in your care, such as behavioral therapy.
- Brainstorming and using methods to help the child, as written in the IFSP or IEP.
- Attending the IFSP or IEP meetings.
- Providing feedback to parents and other professionals about how the child is doing, how she interacts with peers, how she interacts with adults, and issues or concerns that you may observe.

You can help children with special needs feel confident by focusing on their abilities and encouraging independence.



### ★ INCLUSION ★

Inclusion allows all children (with or without special needs) to learn in the same environment with the services and support they need to be successful. Children may receive special services in inclusive environments.

Some ways to meet the needs of children in an inclusive program are:

- **Answering questions:** Children will have questions about children who seem different from them, and this may include children with special needs. It is important that you show a positive attitude toward the children's questions and help them understand and accept a child who may appear different.
- **Encouraging social interaction:** Teach children how to play with and include a child with special needs. You can also encourage friendships by helping a child with special needs be more involved with peers, encouraging play that includes children with special needs, teaching children to invite their peers to join activities, and praising children for positive interactions.
- **Adapting:** Your curriculum, method of teaching, meals, and physical environment may need to be changed to meet a child's needs. Daily routines teach children what to expect and may help them feel comfortable and confident. Children with special needs may also have specific dietary needs.
- **Providing additional support:** You may need to give more attention to a child with special needs than you do with other children. Include all children in special play times or lessons to prevent anyone from feeling left out.
- **Allowing on-site services:** A child with special needs may require individualized sessions with other professionals, such as medical specialists, nutritional therapists, or speech therapists, while he is in your care. You may need to ensure that the child and the therapist have a quiet and private area to conduct a session.
- **Resources/Training:** Attend trainings about supporting children who have special needs, including workshops about understanding disabilities or adapting the environment. Share ideas with other caregivers and parents who care for children with special needs.
- **Changing the physical environment:** You may need to rearrange the physical layout of the environment. This may include widening spaces for a wheelchair or obtaining special equipment.

Many caregivers and educators are concerned that caring for a child with special needs will mean less time and energy for other children. Inclusion actually benefits all children by:

- Helping children to learn, understand, value, and accept each other for their individual differences.
- Providing children without special needs an opportunity to work with others in a diverse environment, which promotes empathy and social skills.

Inclusion benefits everyone.



### TO LEARN MORE

#### BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

##### SPECIAL PEOPLE, SPECIAL WAYS

Arlene Maguire, illustrated by Sheila Bailey

##### CAN I PLAY, TOO?

by Mo Willems (author and illustrator)

#### BOOKS FOR ADULTS

##### INCLUDING ONE, INCLUDING ALL: A GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIP-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSION

by Todd Wanerman, Leslie Roffman, and Cassandra Britton

#### ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
(800) 840-8844 or <https://www.aapd.com/>

FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS  
(800) 331-0688 or <https://fcsn.org/>

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION -  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers)

UNDERSTOOD: RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS  
<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators>